Tantalized

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/25211098.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Alpha Will Graham, Alpha Hannibal Lecter, Post-Fall (Hannibal), Post-Episode: s03e13 The Wrath of the Lamb, References to Ancient Greek Religion & Lore, Angry Will Graham, Sad Hannibal Lecter, Angst with a Happy Ending, Mating Bites, Hannigram A/B/O Reverse Bang, Don't copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 7 of Hannigram Big/Reverse Bangs
Collections:	Hannigram A/B/O Reverse Bang 2020
Stats:	Published: 2020-07-11 Words: 10,150 Chapters: 1/1

Tantalized

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

When Hannibal goes off of a hunt without telling Will, Will is so angry when he finds out that he doesn't speak to, touch, or listen to Hannibal for weeks, and there's nothing that drives an alpha crazier than when their mate ignores them. It gets to the point where Hannibal feels like Tantalus: trapped in place for the crime of murder, and with nourishment that is always *just* out of reach. Yet Hannibal has one thing Tantalus did not, and that is a rapidly approaching rut - one which Hannibal hopes to share with Will so that they can become mates.

If, of course, Will would actually talk to Hannibal again.

Notes

This is my second entry to the 2020 Hannigram A/B/O Reverse Bang!

I was inspired by the gorgeous art of the amazing Hannibalisanass, which is embedded into the fic, and their fantastic banner! Thank you, my darling, for listening to all of my crazy ramblings and going "YES GIVE ME ALL OF IT I WANT IT ALL" while also burying me in emojis and gifs.

See the end of the work for more notes

PROLOGUE: *And upon finding that Tantalus had served them his own son, the gods commanded that Tantalus be imprisoned forever in Tartarus, and the great hound Cerberus itself came to drag him down to the depths of hell . . .*

It starts, as so many, many things do when it comes to Hannibal and Will, with a murder. A reckless one, to be sure, but Hannibal has spent many, many months restraining himself, to let them heal from their fight with the dragon and then their battle with the sea and then their long-waged war against infection. He understands the beast inside of his chest, that hungry, bloody, thirsty maw, and that it can only be stoppered inside a cave for so long before it tears its way out without any regard to its own injuries or to who it hurts.

And Hannibal has no desire to hurt Will. They've traded enough wounds, and only just begun to heal.

So, one day, while Will is happily tearing into the innards of a boat – one of his many odd side jobs to keep the money coming in and explain their lifestyle – Hannibal packs a bag, takes the car, and tells Will he's gone to a job interview in the city. No more than a day or two at most, and he'll even bring dinner home when all is said and done.

Will has grown tan and lax under the sun. He sees no reason to dig into Hannibal's words or his reasons, and waves Hannibal away with a lazy hand. "Text me if you have any problems," he calls to Hannibal.

Hannibal nods, and then he sets off.

He does, indeed, spend the day wandering in the city, popping into pleasant little shops and enjoying some local cuisine, sending photos and texts to Will to keep up the lie. They rarely go into the town, at first because they needed time to heal and then later because it was just more comfortable at home, and so Hannibal makes the best of the opportunity to purchase supplies, charm the locals, and, of course, scan the menu for items.

There is a small clinic in town, not much more than a home-sized office with a tiny little pharmacy, which is probably where Will assumes Hannibal is interviewing at. Hannibal could, of course, if he wanted to keep his hands busy, but he has plenty of money and much better things to do with his hands.

For lunch, Hannibal enjoys a packed and still-warm serving of heaty meat and vegetable stew, a meal whose flavor is enhanced by the fact that Will is having it for lunch as well, for Hannibal had cooked extra and left it to cool in the refrigerator in a bowl with Will's name penciled on top. Will has a bad habit of skipping meals when he gets caught up in work, and Hannibal has learned that the easiest way to lure him to eat is to ensure that he needs to do as little work as possible so that he can quickly go back to tinkering with his engines and solving puzzles that don't involve dead bodies or chatty teammates.

They eat together, despite being apart, and it fills Hannibal's belly in ways that even the best soup in the world could never achieve.

How'd the interview go? Will texts.

Very well. They were impressed. However, they have been managing their clients very well with the current staff, and I am not sure they can afford to add another clinician's salary to the budget.

There is a slight pause, and then Will says, *Guess I'll have to be the household's sole breadwinner then.*

It makes Hannibal smile, for while Will had never really cared about the money they were spending to remain hidden and stay alive while they were healing, he had taken an interest when they were back on their feet. He'd even sold their boat before they bought the house, claiming that they needed to save money for a future nest egg, just in case, and Hannibal had been too enamored by the fact that Will was so clearly planning for long term cohabitation to gently break it to him that Hannibal could have paid for fifty such boats and not even noticed the loss in his account.

When night falls, he picks a couple – sweet and young and vibrant, stealing forbidden kisses under the moon, giggling like naughty schoolchildren out past bedtime – and slits their throats. They are simmering in the cocktail of lust and adoration, which will make the meat all the sweeter, and Hannibal breaks down their bodies in record time, finding that the skill returns to him as easily as riding a bicycle or playing an instrument. The bones and scraps he bundles together, to be placed in a weighted bag and discarded in the ocean, a fitting grave for a tasty meal.

He stays in the city overnight, to further lend credence to the illusion of his lie, and Will sends him a blurry photo of a hastily-put together sandwich for dinner, because he knows it riles Hannibal up, especially as there was a perfectly serviceable dinner that Hannibal left for Will next to the soup for lunch.

The next day, Hannibal returns to Will, who greets him with a kiss and a smile, and when Will steps outside to the shed where he does his work, Hannibal goes to the trunk and liberates the sealed packages of meat, which he places in the spare freezer that he had installed in the pantry. Will knows the freezer exists, of course, but he ignores it except when he gets a little overeager with fishing and needs somewhere to put the extra fish so that they don't end up eating fish for three meals a day for a week straight. So it's a perfect hiding spot.

Then he goes and makes lunch, because Will sent him a picture of plain eggs and half burnt toast for breakfast, and Hannibal did not drag them out of the ocean and perform unsterile surgery on a rocking boat for Will to die of malnutrition or scurvy.

Will laughs when he sees the elaborate lunch – fresh, crisp salad from the garden out back, fried and marinated chicken from the butcher, and grilled pineapple from the farmer's market – but he obediently washes his hands and settles in to eat. He makes happy sounds as he does, and that nourishes Hannibal almost as much as the food does, for there is nothing that makes an alpha happier than to see his mate filling his belly with food he has grown and cooked and plated. The only thing that would make it better would be if they were using Hannibal's chosen meat, but the chicken was already marinated, and so Hannibal cooked it.

Well, that, and perhaps if Will were to use proper table manners, but the last time Hannibal mentioned it, Will gathered all of the knives and used them as target practice in the backyard, and Hannibal has no desire to go and buy an entirely new set of utensils at the moment, so he lets Will's improper use of forks and spoons slide, as he always does.

And, of course, more importantly, Will has grown accustomed to picking out the taste of human flesh, and Hannibal must choose wisely when to have that fight, for Will is fierce, now, with his claws fully grown and no longer blunted by societal concerns.

Will, fortunately enough, then gives him the perfect opportunity.

"That was great," Will says, patting at his stomach and eyeing the extra pineapple. Hannibal gets up to give him another serving without comment, for he is always gratified to see the evidence of Will's appetite. "Do you . . . uh . . . Do you have set plans for dinner already?"

Will's asked this question before, of course, so Hannibal responds as he always does. "I would be delighted to eat fish that you have caught for us, my love."

Will rolls his eyes, as he always does. "Not why I asked," he says, which is new. Usually he just blushes and then goes and grabs fish from the freezer. "I uh. Got to talking with our neighbors yesterday?"

Hannibal raises an eyebrow. They do have neighbors, of course, but the houses here are spaced far apart, for this neighborhood is quite upscale and the high price grants with not only privacy, but a lot of acres. Hannibal's put those acres to use for a garden and a shed for Will, but Will is usually content to remain within their yard and so it's been left to Hannibal to socialize, for the most part. And he hasn't even done much of that, for neighborhood gossip could never compare to Will's brilliant, cutting wit.

"Don't look at me like that," Will says, pointing a messy fork at him before stabbing a pineapple piece and bringing it to his mouth. "I can socialize. And uh. I might have. Invited them to dinner?"

Delight fills Hannibal's breast. On a purely instinctual level, he is pleased to see his mate reaching out and forging connections, but also that Will would think to do this without asking Hannibal's permission first. He bought this house under both of their names, even if Hannibal has the majority of the assets and the wealth, and Hannibal is forever telling him that he can buy whatever he likes and do whatever he wishes. Hannibal has never wanted a weak mate, and he enjoys Will's fire and independence out of bed as much as he does in bed.

"I hope that won't ruin your plans?" Will finishes meekly.

He doesn't bare his throat, as an omega might, but he does lower his eyes, a concession from one alpha to another. Hannibal doesn't let that sit for more than a second before he leans forward and tips Will's head up again.

"This is your house too, my love," Hannibal reminds him, as he has so many times before. "You may invite anyone you wish. And I'd be a poor cook indeed if I couldn't improvise."

A blush fills Will's cheeks, but that is nothing compared to the cloud of pleased alpha scent that emanates from Will. Hannibal would always be thrilled to roll in any scent of Will's, but when he is happy and content and pleased, there is no better perfume in the world.

Except, perhaps, when Will is enraged.

"They said they'd stop by around 7," Will says. "That enough time for the world famous chef to get Café Lecter going?"

"More than enough," Hannibal purrs, and leans over the table to rub cheeks with Will. "Absolutely more than enough."

They have two dining tables – Will says it's because Hannibal is an overdramatic child who is overcompensating for the fact that their house is smaller than his Chandler Square address, Hannibal maintains it's practical given the climate and Will's tendency to wander outside to eat meals, get distracted halfway through, and abandon the plate and utensils on the closest flat surface – but seeing as tonight the skies are clear and the temperature is warm, Hannibal chooses to set the outside table. The veranda has a gorgeous view of their backyard and the nearby ocean, and it has a nice fence to wall everything in with a separate entrance, which means they can have company over without having to open their front door and allow prying, nosy eyes into their sanctuary.

Will wanders in around the time that Hannibal is preheating the oven. He eyes the food spread out all over the kitchen islands (Hannibal insisted on two), the cutting boards spaced out across the counters, and the pots waiting on the stoves like soldiers for marching orders, and goes, "Wow, this brings back memories."

"I must confess some joy in it," Hannibal says, watching as Will leans over to poke at a spool of string. "Elaborate meals are not usually what you favor."

"The quicker it's able to get in my mouth, the better," Will remarks. "What's the menu?"

"You'll find out," Hannibal tells him.

Will gives him a look, but it softens midway, probably because Hannibal is wearing the apron Will bought him on a whim when they went furniture shopping and Will was so bored he was literally dragging his feet. It is bright red, like blood, and contains the words *Mister Good Lookin' is Cookin'*. Hannibal has a proper apron, of course, but it vanished right about the time Will's beaten up shoes vanished, and they've mutually agreed not to ask what happened.

They do not need a repeat of the fight that occurred when they needed supplies, and Will lied and left to buy some at the same time that Hannibal left and stole some.

"Fineeee," Will whines. "I guess I'll just go shower then."

Hannibal hums in agreement, going to stir the sauce, and then pauses when he hears the telltale sounds of Will coming closer instead of heading upstairs. It doesn't take much effort, of course; every inch of Hannibal is attuned to Will. He can feel the faint heat of Will's body,

he can smell the richness of Will's sweat, he can hear the shuffle of Will's feet against the floor. And he can guess what Will is thinking of doing, for Will loves nothing greater than derailing Hannibal's plans.

Hannibal sighs and shakes his head. "Will, I do not have time to shower."

Will comes to an abrupt halt, only inches from Hannibal, and makes a soft sound. No doubt he mostly wants to be close just to get Hannibal's clothes dirty, but Hannibal still feels the urge to give in and let Will do whatever he wants, because no alpha in their right mind pushes their mate away. Still, Hannibal has made a life mastering his instincts.

"Will," Hannibal warns, edging his tone with alpha displeasure.

An omega might whine or bow, but Will, as a fellow alpha, seems not the least bit cowed by it. "Aw, come on," he says. "You're dying to scent me, I know it. Right now I smell like – "

"Rusted metal and rancid grease."

" – like not you," Will finishes, ignoring him completely, for the fact that Will usually ends up covered in grease is another argument they don't need to repeat. He taps a foot against Hannibal's shoe, like a kitten pawing at a mother cat asking for attention. "Don't you want to scent me?"

"I can do so when dinner is ready. Or would you rather our guests go hungry?"

Will grumbles at the reminder, a little thrumming purr like a motor engine. It warms Hannibal's heart to hear, for an alpha or omega purr cannot be forced, and only comes when the alpha or omega is truly at ease. Hannibal had never heard it before, but now he hears it at least once a week, and each time it is a revelation. He has an entire music room in his mind palace now, solely devoted to the growing concert of Will's many sounds.

Fortunately, though, the reminder of guests seems to get Will moving. He departs the kitchen peacefully, and as soon as he is gone, Hannibal turns his attention to preparing the meat, now that he no longer has fear of Will walking in and recognizing the distinct signs of human flesh.

While Will showers, removing a day's worth of grease and dirt and grass stains, Hannibal starts bringing everything together. His time management skills, fortunately, never suffered, so by the time Hannibal has brought out the plates and arranged the chairs and done the final checks, their neighbors are at the door.

The Turners are nice folks, living out their retirement in warmth and comfort. They welcomed Hannibal and Will to the neighborhood with a fresh baked homemade apple cobbler, and whenever they pass paths in the neighborhood they stop and chat and are in general very friendly. They also have a lovely German shepherd, which endears them greatly to Will, and is probably the reason he speaks to them at all, because Hannibal's pretty certain that Will hasn't even said so much as "hello" to the rest of their neighbors.

“Welcome, welcome,” Hannibal says, unlatching the gate. “It’s so lovely to have you join us tonight.”

Alex Turner beams as he holds the gate for his wife, Sara, who hands Hannibal a bottle with a festive ribbon. “We were pleased to get the invitation! Nothing better than having a good dinner with your neighbors, right? Where’s your husband got to, Lee?”

“Grant was in the shower,” Hannibal says, their cover names rolling off his tongue like water off of a duck. “He should be out here momentarily – ah, here he is.”

Will emerges as he speaks, hair still damp, but dressed fashionably and in clothes without stains or holes, which is a vast improvement. He shakes hands with Alex, grinning wildly, and kisses Sara’s hand, as is proper for an alpha to someone else’s omega spouse.

Meanwhile, Hannibal brings out the appetizers – a tray of smoked fish nestled on beds of soft yogurt and fresh cucumber circles – and gracefully accepts the Turners’ fervent compliments, although he defers, as always, to Will.

“My husband caught the fish, of course, so I cannot take full credit,” Hannibal demurs. “And he built the beds for the vegetable garden, which supplies us with produce.”

Sara nudges her husband playfully. “Now, now, why don’t I get a homemade vegetable garden bed, Alex?”

“You’ve never asked,” Alex laughs uproariously.

Next, Hannibal brings out the main course, to the delight of the Turners and the appreciation of Will. Hannibal sets the plate down in the middle with a flourish, and then begins to carve off pieces, filling first Sara and Alex’s plates, as proper, before he turns his attention to Will’s plate and his own.

“That must have taken hours,” Alex declares. “My god, what is this creation, Lee?”

“Bacon wrapped pork tenderloin,” Hannibal explains, gently placing a slice on to Will’s plate, “stuffed inside with cheese, mushrooms, and greens, and on a bed of fresh potatoes and squash. It did take me hours, of course, but time is never wasted on doing things right, and I find that applies especially well to cooking.”

“Well said,” Sara notes. “Grant, you’re so lucky to have a wonderful chef as your husband.”

Will, who is currently mid bite, does not immediately answer. Neither does Hannibal, for his eyes are fixed upon Will, and therefore he sees the exact moment that Will registers the taste buried deep within the glaze and the marinade – sees the exact moment that Will, with his gorgeous mind and sharp eyes and honed investigative skills, puts everything together. Will chews slowly, like he is savoring the flavor, and then swallows and sets his silverware down. He covers it by reaching for his glass of wine, so thoughtfully brought by the Turners, but his eyes are full of fire that has nothing to do with the spices in the meat when he meets Hannibal’s eyes.

“Yes,” Will says, after a pointed moment. “I most certainly am.”

The Turners don’t seem to notice the awkwardness or the anger in the moment. Hannibal breathes it in, the spice of Will’s anger, and keeps eating, for he knows Will would not retaliate now, if only because the Turners have a dog to return to.

Dessert is a calm affair, and after Hannibal accepts more praise for his crème brûlée with fresh raspberries and delicate caramel slices, the Turners bid them good night and leave.

They have scarcely left the property when Hannibal hears the rasp of silverware against a plate, and turns just in time for Will to slam him against the veranda’s glass windows, the fine carving knife at his throat.

Will has his sharp alpha fangs bared now, his eyes so fiery they’re akin to a volcano, and anger roils off of him like steam from a hot oven. The carving knife is still warm from the meat and tinged with grease that stains Hannibal’s skin and shirt, but it is sharp enough that Hannibal can’t do much but bear his throat to face his mate’s anger.

“A job interview?” Will hisses, like an angry cat that has been tricked into a bathtub full of water. “A *job interview*?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, slow and careful to avoid sudden movements that might aggravate the knife. “I interviewed a suitable couple, and they passed with flying colors to serve as our dinner. As predicted, they fulfilled their responsibilities beautifully.”

Usually, Will is amused by Hannibal’s puns. Today, his nostrils flare as he takes in Hannibal’s scent, testing his truthfulness, and then he puts more weight into his stance, until Hannibal can’t retreat any further, so he has to live with the knife beginning to part skin and Will’s knee putting pressure at his groin.

“I thought we agreed that there would be no hunting,” Will snarls.

“You stated as such,” Hannibal says. “I never agreed.”

“The agreement was implicit in you agreeing to cohabit with me and *not* draw the attention of law enforcement!”

“No one will find the bodies,” Hannibal states calmly. “They were lovers, ready to elope; no one will suspect anything for some time. And even if they do, all that remains of them are either digesting in our stomachs or in the stomachs of creatures in the ocean. And I have my lovely neighbors who will vouch for my character, thanks to you.”

Will’s eyes narrow, but he doesn’t push the knife deeper. After all, he knows as well as Hannibal that he invited the Turners without consulting Hannibal, and without knowledge of his true plans, so either way Hannibal would have served the meat to him, and either way, Will would have found out.

Will takes a long, deep breath and steps back, but he keeps the knife at Hannibal’s neck. “Are you going to go hunting again?”

“I have enough meat to last us for a while.”

It’s not a denial, and Will knows it. But Will is also aware of the limited storage space in this house, and Hannibal can only get away with harvesting meat so many times in a tiny car or dark back alley. Besides, they agreed to stay here as long as they could; Hannibal would not draw attention to himself, and certainly not to his mate, for he would not see them caught or separated.

Will takes the knife away, finally, and lays it carefully down upon the table. Without making eye contact, he hangs his head and takes a deep breath, and then says, “You just . . . couldn’t resist doing it, could you?”

Hannibal doesn’t answer. What could he say that Will does not already know?

Will nods sharply to the ground, accepting the silence, and stalks past him towards the door. “You’re sleeping on the couch tonight,” he declares, and slams the door so hard that something inside rattles and falls to the floor.

The couch is comfortable, of course, because Hannibal would never settle for anything less, but it was meant to be a couch and not a bed. Hannibal sighs, thinking of the long night ahead, and begins to clean. When he goes inside, he finds the downstairs deserted, but there is one less bottle of wine in their rack and one less glass in the cabinet. He also finds the master bedroom locked up tight, so he’s reduced to cleaning himself in the half bathroom downstairs, although fortunately Will had aimed to threaten and not wound, and so the cut is easily patched up and will not scar.

Then he gathers some blankets and pillows, makes his bed, and lies in it.

PART I: *And Hades decreed thus as the fate of Tantalus: That he be placed beneath a tree filled with ripe fruit, so that he may know hunger, for whenever he might reach for the fruit, the tree’s branches might grow until they were out of his reach.*

Will’s anger runs hot, as all alphas’ do, and his is sharp and pointed from years of fending off pushy agents and pushier potential mates. His empathy allows him to put that sharp point where it may do the most damage, and Hannibal has felt its sting more than once, even after they healed and came to an understanding.

Still, it bears repeating: Will is an alpha, and Hannibal would be a poor psychiatrist indeed if he was not able to understand alphas.

Hannibal is not an omega – he has not the sweet whines or sweeter perfumes of a soft, appeasing omega – but he does know what makes an alpha tick, and he’s definitely aware that the sensation can be enhanced by the knowledge that it is a fellow alpha who is doing the act.

So, when Hannibal awakens at dawn, as is usual, he packs away his makeshift bed, picks the lock to the master bedroom, and enters, relieved that Will did not barricade the door shut with a dresser or chair.

Will is sprawled across the master bed, a fine linen sheet draped across his torso, his curls splayed across the pillows and his arms spread across the mattress. He has filled out and tanned under the warm sun, and Hannibal pauses, ever so slightly, to take in the full and beautiful sight of his mate, naked as the day he was born, in their nest, their bedroom that they have designed and scented and christened many times over. Will doesn't always sleep in the nude, but he does enjoy the heat, and Hannibal has never protested when Will slips into bed like a god fresh from a bath.

Like this, Will is undeniably an alpha, although many of his coworkers thought him a beta. He has the strong alpha shoulders, to pin down a mate no matter how hard they wriggle; muscled alpha thighs, to chase down prey for food and omegas for the taking; and a knot that, even loose, is enough to give most people pause upon sight.

Hannibal's mouth waters. He has yet to master taking Will's knot in his mouth, although he knows it is possible and Will has never faulted him for failing, merely laughing and returning to rut between Hannibal's thighs.

Still, what better time to practice than now, for what alpha would not be appeased by a mate kneeling in supplication at their feet, offering up their mouth as a prayer for forgiveness?

Hannibal pads over to the bed. It is easy to slide down the sheet, for it is fine and soft and translucent, and Will barely registers it when it pools at the end of the bed. Their bedroom sitting area opens to a lovely balcony with floor to ceiling windows, and so when Will rolls over, mumbling to himself, the light highlights his chest and arms and legs, and Hannibal finds himself falling to his knees without a conscious thought. He can see no reason to worship an ethereal, absent God when a living one of flesh and blood lays before him.

Will's scent is absolutely decadent, when Hannibal leans in close. He must have showered last night, to be sure, as alphas have keen noses and Will – for all his anger – would not have wanted the Turners' scent in their nest, but the warm air has led Will to sweat, and if Hannibal could survive off Will's sweat alone, he would, for it smells delicious, like fresh ground spices.

He's just reaching up and opening his mouth when Will's hand twitches, and then fingers are around Hannibal's throat, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing.

"No," Will says, mild as a summer day and stern as the summer sun. "I told you to sleep on the couch."

"I did," Hannibal says. "It is daylight now, my love."

"I didn't say it would be one day," Will chides. He squeezes tighter, forcing Hannibal closer to the bed, so that his nose touches the sheets and all he smells is Will and Hannibal, beautifully mixed for their many nights of passion. "I'm still *very* angry, Hannibal."

"I can give you an outlet for that anger."

"Sex is not the outlet I want right now," Will says. He releases Hannibal's throat after another warning squeeze, and then twists to bring his leg forward. He doesn't quite have the proper

leverage to move Hannibal, but when he pushes his foot against Hannibal, Hannibal allows himself to be moved away.

Then Will stands, glorious as a conquering emperor, and points at the door.

“Out.”

Hannibal gets out.

Hannibal does not see hide nor hair of Will all day long. He leaves trays of food outside of Will’s door, each more elaborate and stuffed with Will’s favorites than the last, but the door never opens and the food grows cold and stale. Hannibal does not hover, exactly, but he does walk past once or twice, just to reassure himself that Will is still breathing inside.

What he is not expecting is for the front door to open when the sun sets, and for Will to walk in accompanied by the sound of barks and clicking nails.

Hannibal hurries down the stairs, the dinner tray still in his hands, and finds Will in the entry way, hanging up his coat and smiling down at three large puppies. Hannibal has no idea what breed they are, for they are fast and darting all over the place, but Will pets them all and coos at them and pays no attention to Hannibal.

Finally, Hannibal clears his throat. “Good evening, Will.”

“Good evening, Hannibal,” Will replies in measured tones, never looking up, as though he’s returning from a quick trip to the store and not from climbing out of their balcony and skipping off to town, all without Hannibal noticing. “I already got dinner when I picked up the dogs, so don’t worry about feeding me. They’ll be sleeping with me, of course, so the couch is your kingdom again tonight.”

Hannibal swallows. To be deprived of Will for one night is torment; to be deprived of Will for a second? He has not been out of Will’s presence since the day they took separate flights to arrive, to throw off the scent, and it had been pure torture waiting for Will to come to him, even if Hannibal had known from the lack of news that Will had not been caught or otherwise delayed.

“I see,” Hannibal says, for he has nothing else to say.

“Excellent,” Will says, and stands and clicks at his trio of puppies. “Good night.”

Hannibal brings Will a dessert tray, mostly because he isn’t sure what calories Will did ingest but also just to feast on the sight of his mate one more time. Unfortunately, when he opens the door, the puppies swarm him with barks, and Will looks up from where he is sitting in bed, a book braced in his lap and a wine glass in his hand.

“I said the couch,” Will says warningly.

“I just thought I’d bring you some dessert,” Hannibal explains, not moving from the doorway. “Some sweetness, to keep your blood sugar up. You’ll need a lot of energy to train these fine

fellows."

"That's Cera," Will says, pointing at one, although how he can tell them apart Hannibal has no idea. "And that's Bear. And that's Russ. You'd better get used to them."

"As you wish," Hannibal says, although inwardly he cringes, thinking of all the fine things these puppies may chew on, pee on, or otherwise destroy. Will seems to sense this, for he whistles sharply and the puppies sit down as one, staring at Hannibal like he's an intruder upon their master's kingdom.

Hannibal sets the tray down on the dresser, because it'll be out of the way but still within eyesight, and Will may decide to indulge once Hannibal leaves. For lack of anything else to say, he ventures, "What are you reading about, my love?"

Will sips at his one glass, eyes dark and devious. "Tantalization," he replies, and settles back against the pillows with an air of finality. "Good *night*, Hannibal."

The next morning, when Hannibal goes to pick the lock, the puppies raise a ruckus before Hannibal can even make it up the stairs.

PART II: *And Hades decreed next as the fate of Tantalus: That he be placed in a pool filled with glistening water, so that he may thirst, for whenever he might reach for the water, the pool's edges would grow until it was too shallow for him to reach.*

Will does, at least, consent to eat meals with Hannibal after a few days, although he speaks monosyllabic comments and only when spoken to. He spends most of his time outside, with his boat engines and with his dogs, and continues to refuse to let Hannibal into the bedroom. He most definitely does not allow Hannibal to touch him, and Hannibal's dreams begin to star Will's skin in worrying clarity.

Mates, whether bonded or not, reaffirm their relationship with touch and scent. Usually, Will is always near Hannibal, and he initiates as much as he allows when it comes to Hannibal rubbing his cheeks or brushing his skin or even just cuddling in bed. To be deprived of Will's touch troubles Hannibal deeply, for an alpha whose mate rejects them is an alpha who has been found lacking, and no alpha wishes to be found lacking in any respect. Mate rejection is a leading cause of both homicide and suicide, after all.

Fortunately, Hannibal remains tasked with the laundry, and Will doesn't protest when Hannibal ducks into the bedroom when he is not present, so Hannibal often finds himself spending ages to gather up Will's clothing and launder it and dry it, just to catch a whiff of his mate's scent.

Then, one morning, Will comes downstairs with a smile on his face, and asks Hannibal to make a packed lunch. Hannibal obliges, overjoyed to have been conversed with, but when he ventures outside with a basket and a wine bottle, he finds Will at the dock at the end of their property. There is a boat there now, although Will had previously refused to buy a new one, expensive and sleek and beautiful, and Hannibal is part way through wishing he had chosen more suitable attire when Will casually mentions that he is going alone.

Hannibal can't help the whimper that escapes him then.

Will tilts his head, a sweet, innocent smile on his face. "I just want to try and catch some fish, that's all," he says. "You wouldn't begrudge me of that, would you?"

"No," Hannibal says helplessly. "When can I expect you back?"

Will shrugs. He is wearing only shorts and a white shirt with a hat perched jauntily on his head, but Hannibal sees the packed duffel bag at the end of the dock, and this boat is large enough to host a family.

"A day or two, at least," Will answers. "Maybe a few days? Depends on how the fish bite, honestly."

"Then . . . I'll take care of the dogs, will I?"

"Oh, no, I wouldn't saddle you with that," Will laughs. He puts his fingers into his mouth and whistles, and the puppies race up the dock. It's only been a few days, and yet Hannibal could swear they've at least doubled their body weight as they jump into the boat and it rocks in the waves. "Cera, Bear, and Russ are coming with me. It'll be good for them, to get used to a new environment and all," he adds, scratching at one puppy's chin and petting another, a wide smile on his face. "They're so sweet."

They are sweet, and golden, and adorable, and Hannibal wants to wring their throats and flay them alive and turn them into rugs to adorn their nest.

Still, he has one last card to play. He clears his throat and takes a step forward. "I packed enough for both of us, and I've nothing outstanding to deal with here. I could come with you."

"Nah," Will says, too casually. "Some free time would be good for you too, Hannibal. I wouldn't want you to become so dependent that I was weighing you down, now would I? I get some alone time, you get some alone time – win-win, right?"

He takes the basket from Hannibal, firm but unyielding, and Hannibal has no choice but to let him.

"Will," he breathes, a whine in his throat, all alpha appeasement, and reaches for his mate.

Will pulls away, cold as a glacier, and walks to the stern. When Hannibal tries to follow, for Will is a siren song that Hannibal can never fail to follow, the puppies raise a chorus of barks, like a wall of furry denial, and Hannibal is left standing on the shore, shoulders slumped and skin cold, as he watches his mate sail away without him.

For dinner, Hannibal cooks one of Will's fresh caught fish. It tastes like ash in his mouth, and Hannibal has to force himself to finish it. It's a telltale sign, because lack of appetite is one of the symptoms of mate rejection, as the alpha or omega becomes obsessed with catching their mate's attention and all energy goes towards that instead of eating, drinking, sleeping, or any

other essential human needs. Hannibal has barely caught more than 2 hours of sleep a night, a record even for him.

He retreats to their bed, because Will and his puppies are not there to tell him no, and spends hours rubbing himself all over in order to put his scent back where it belongs.

When sleep does not come, he picks up the book Will left on the bedside and pokes dully at the pages, if only to get hints of Will's scent.

It's a book on mythology, one of the many Hannibal keeps in his library, and Will's scent is strongest in the middle. Hannibal presses the pages to his nose and inhales until Will's scent is too faint even for him, and then he lays down on the bed and stares blankly at the book. Dimly, he registers that the story Will had spent the most time reading was that of Tantalus, the man who served the gods his own son and then was tormented forever in Tartarus for it. Hannibal had liked the story too, if only because he has served a man his own son, and been only praised for his efforts.

Still, he can't help but notice one line in particular, which mentions the great hound of hell, Cerberus. Hannibal does not think it a coincidence that Will named his dogs Cera, Bear, and Russ.

Hannibal closes his eyes, and dreams of dogs and sharp teeth and a hunger all consuming.

PART III: *And Hades decreed last as the fate of Tantalus: That over his head would forever tower a stone, ready to crush him, as a reminder of the anger of the gods he had so foolishly tried to trick.*

Will does not return the next day, or the next, or the next.

Hannibal cleans obsessively, for it is the only way to keep the angry thoughts from devouring his mind whole. He organizes the shed, mops every floor, redoes the guest bedroom, bleaches every corner of the bathrooms, and cleans the veranda. He tries to cook, for Will would not like him to starve, but no matter what he does, the food tastes only of ash and dust, and so Hannibal can barely choke down a few bites before he has to concede defeat. Water is about the only thing he can stomach, and even that is limited to a few swallows.

During the lonely nights, Hannibal curls up on their bed, staring at his phone and willing Will to contact him, even though he knows that service must be next to nonexistent on the ocean – and assuming, of course, that Will even brought his phone in the first place.

Part of him – cold, cruel, calculating, the part that kept Hannibal mateless for so long and drove him to put a saw against the skull of his beloved – wonders what plans should be made, if Will has truly left him. Will has access to all of Hannibal's accounts, and although Hannibal does not think Will cruel enough to drain them dry and left Hannibal penniless, he could still take a significant chunk. If that happens, Hannibal could sell the house and find somewhere else to start over, and kill whenever he wanted.

The other part – the part the twisted to cushion Will's fall, that kept watch over Will even as his insides burned with pain, that waited anxiously by the door like a dog until Will landed

and came to their home – merely whines and whines and whines, turning in fruitless circles, unable to comprehend a life without his mate, his gorgeous, fiery, cruel mate. It would be like living in a world without color or taste, and Hannibal would be a lesser man for it.

By the fifth day, when Will's scent is mostly eradicated from the entire house by Hannibal's anxious scenting, Hannibal's phone chimes.

He snatches it up, for it only chimes when it finds an alert regarding the Ripper or Will and Hannibal or when a phone connects to their network, and is relieved beyond measure to see that Will's phone has indeed connected to the wifi again.

Normally, Hannibal would make himself presentable to go outside, but now, after five days of brutal agony, Hannibal just jams on his shoes, throws on a coat, and runs outside at full pace. The sight of Will's boat as it gets closer only encourages him to run faster, so that Hannibal is quite out of breath when he reaches the end of the dock, and can only pant and shake as Will's boat finally comes into dock.

Will looks at him, raises an eyebrow, and says, "You look awful."

"I missed you," Hannibal says, because there is nothing else to say. "I . . . I missed you."

Will turns his back, dismissing Hannibal entirely to grab his duffel bag and a cooler. "Go take a shower," he commands. "You stink, which is not something I ever thought I'd have to say to you."

"Are you joining me?" Hannibal asks, because one must hope.

Will's sharp look answers that.

Hannibal slinks away, tail between his legs, and heads for the shower. He takes his time undressing and allowing the shower to run so that the water is warm, but eventually he concedes defeat and gets in, for Will would never take so long if he were to join Hannibal and the house is not so large that it would take very long to get from the dock to the bedroom. Hannibal scrubs himself in quick, dull movements, not even cheered by the scent of Will's favorite soap or the memories of the energetic reunion sex that carried over into the shower when they first came to the house. As he washes, he wonders how long Will intends to keep him like this: leashed and neutered and trembling with the sword of Damocles above his head, especially since he won't be able to control himself nearly as well when he comes into rut.

When Hannibal steps out and begins to pat himself dry, at first he thinks that perhaps his soap has expired, for he still stinks rather potently of alpha and his own sweat. A few discrete sniffs proves that he smells strong enough that even polite company might remark, which is when it finally dawns upon Hannibal what exactly is going on.

After all, possessiveness and lack of appetite are not the symptoms for mate rejection alone.

Hannibal looks into the mirror and sees himself: dripping wet, hair in disarray, and eyes bright alpha red, all hallmarks of an alpha in full rut.

Will must surely be able to smell him now – smell the siren call of his mate, his one and only – yet Will does not come, and Hannibal cannot help the snarl that escapes him at the thought of Will ignoring him through rut as well.

Or worse – finding other company to sate himself whilst Hannibal is left alone in their nest.

Normally, this would not be a problem for a mated couple, but they are not bonded yet. Hannibal would have bonded them in an instant, for it takes only one bite to the bonding gland in the back of the neck, but the fangs he would have used were filed down during his stay in the BSHCI, and alpha fangs are like regular teeth in that they do not grow back. If they are to bond, only Will can do it, and all Hannibal can think of now is how Will rejected him, wounded him, sailed away without him.

Outside of rut, Hannibal could have accepted that and given Will distance, if that is what he wanted.

In rut, with his adrenaline coursing and blood pumping and everything primed to breed and bite and take, Hannibal finds it unacceptable, like asking the sun not to rise or the ocean not to crash or the wind not to flow. Will is *his*, and Hannibal leaves the bathroom to find his mate like a lion stalking prey.

He finds Will in the living room, still in his fishing clothes, arranging something on the table, and the sight of his mate ignoring him and not answering the call to his rut with open arms and spread legs and naked skin enrages Hannibal further, until all gentle thoughts leave his mind and the only thing he can do is to charge straight forward. He plunges into Will, throwing them both to the ground, and when he feels Will resist and try to roll them over, Hannibal snaps and roars and pins Will to the ground, sitting high upon his chest so that Will cannot kick and pinning down his arms so that Will cannot punch.

“Claim me,” Hannibal snarls, and the words are so distorted he can barely understand himself.

Will’s eyes dilate as he gets a good whiff of Hannibal, because their bodies remember their connection even if Will denies it. He goes still under Hannibal and does not fight, but passivity is not what Hannibal wants.

“*Claim. Me*.”

“Hannibal, you’re in rut,” Will says, soothing and gentle and soft. “You’re not thinking clearly.”

Hannibal bares his teeth, instinct driving him to show fangs that no longer exist thanks to Alana and Chilton and Jack. “I’m thinking more clearly than I have in days,” he replies. “Rut gives me the strength to do what must be done.”

“And what is that?”

“For you to claim me, and bind us together forever.”

Will tilts his head, a smile upon his face. It is mocking, like the sound of the hyena laughing at a prey who hopes to flee. “And what if I do not want us bound together?”

“Then I will tear you apart,” Hannibal says, “and carry you in my belly forever.”

Rut can give an alpha extraordinary strength, as heat gives omegas strength. Hannibal has seen alphas in rut break down walls and crack apart surgery tables; tearing one human apart would not be beyond him, even with his empty belly. It is why suppressants are mandated for alphas and omegas, to limit property damage and the taking of lives.

“You’d regret it, Hannibal,” Will says, sing-song and sweet. “You’d regret it to the end of your days.”

And Hannibal would, and he knows he would, but all he knows now is that his mate is rejecting him *again*, so Hannibal leans down close and snaps his teeth by Will’s ear, and demands, “*Claim me*.”

Will just keeps looking at him, a devil’s smile upon his face, and the mockery enrages Hannibal in a way it normally wouldn’t, with his mind clouded by rut, and all he knows is that his mate is denying him. Hannibal has no fangs now, so a bite would do nothing but perhaps leave a mark that would fade within days, but instinct cares little about common sense and science, and so Hannibal leans down and sinks his teeth into Will’s neck, digging in as an alpha would to mate, and he whines in distress when no connection sparks.

And Will . . . Will pushes him away, and throws his head back, and he laughs.

EPILOGUE: *And Tantalus reached for the fruit and reached for the water and reached for the stone, but he could not touch them nor ignore them. Yet forevermore did he try, for he proclaimed that he would be master over the tree and the pool and the stone, and one day, be master over the gods themselves.*

Will says something, then, but Hannibal is past comprehending human words – all he knows is that there is noise where there should only be appeasement and eagerness and pleasure, and so he lunges for Will's throat. Even without his fangs, he can do damage, and Will has his throat so beautifully bared.

But Will, as usual, reads him well, and he heaves his chest and twists to the side to dump Hannibal gracelessly on the ground.

Hannibal's towel falls away, one end clutched tight in Will's palm, and he uses it like a lash to keep Hannibal at bay. Alphas in rut respond only to pain and to pleasure, which Will knows all too well, so when Hannibal feels the sting of the rolled towel he hisses and retreats. It does not give him clarity, exactly, but it does give him the pleasure of knowing that his mate is responding to him.

Will advances on him, eyes aflame with his own alpha red, and whips the towel again, driving Hannibal like a rancher drives a steer. Whenever Hannibal darts to the side, Will corrects his course, and whenever Hannibal comes to a stop, Will smacks him again until he moves.

They continue this dance all the way down the corridor, and then up the stairs, and then through the hallway, until at last they are in their bedroom.

Hannibal feels more alive than he has in weeks – sweaty and panting and aroused, with his mate grinning a Cheshire cat grin and wielding a towel whip to guide him, inside of the nest bought of them built – and this time when he bares his teeth, it is with pleasure that soaks his scent and makes Will's eyes flutter.

Will purrs at him, like an omega would, and Hannibal closes his eyes and lets the purr settle him, not fighting it as his mate comes closer and closer.

That is, until he feels the towel wind around his wrists, binding them tight, and his displeased snarl is cut short when Will grabs his waist and heaves him onto the bed. The bed is a mess, of course, full of linens and clothes and pillows, and Hannibal wriggles furiously, attacking his binding with teeth and fingers, for they are obstacles to his mate and Hannibal will abide by none. Yet just as rut clouds his higher thought from speaking and processing words, so too does it cloud his ability to escape his bindings.

Will lands on top of him, heavy and hot and strong, and Hannibal twists to press every inch of them together. Will's knee is digging painfully into his chest and his elbow is keeping Hannibal's hands bound tight, but it doesn't matter; his mate is *here*, naked and aroused and in their nest, and that's all Hannibal needs.

"Will," he moans, too hot and wound up to articulate anything else. "Will!"

Will shushes him, a steady purr thrumming through his chest, and with his free hand he smooths Hannibal's sweaty hair like a mother cat licks a kitten. "Shhh," he croons. "I know what you need, Hannibal. I'm here. I'll give you everything you need."

There's a metallic click in the distance, like a lock coming undone, and Hannibal in his fevered state can hardly comprehend the need for lubrication when they're both sweaty so much. He'd much rather take Will as he is, to yield for his mate despite the pain, but Will's knee finds his leg and keeps him from thrashing away from Will's cold fingers.

Even after the dry spell, Hannibal's body still knows his mate, and he can't help the whines that spill from his throat as Will makes room for himself deep inside Hannibal. There's no comparison on earth, truly, to knowing that his body can take Will's knot like any omega, and in fact better than any omega, to see Will's face twist in tortured pleasure as Hannibal milks him for release, to smell like Will for days and days and days no matter how much he showers.

Hannibal hardly notices when Will releases his hands; he is too busy encouraging his mate to try and fight, even after Will grabs his leg and rolls him over. He welcomes the hot press of Will's chest to his back, the too-tight squeeze of Will's hand on his neck, the painful burn of the stretch as Will settles in between his legs and spreads them wide.

"I just couldn't resist," Will says, petting over Hannibal's thighs, words that make no sense to Hannibal. "Just as you couldn't."

Hannibal doesn't really care what Will couldn't do, right now; all he cares about is what Will can do, and what he should do, and what he will do, and that is why he growls into the bedsheets and pushes back against Will and spits, "*Claim me*."

And after seven days of torture and neglect and silence, Will finally gives Hannibal what he needs and sinks deep inside, and they both sigh in relief.

Will sets up a steady rhythm after that, pounding Hannibal hard enough that if they had a headboard it would surely make a dent in the wall, but Hannibal doesn't care, because all it means is that his mate is strong and powerful. Hannibal writhes and moans and begs, spurring Will on with everything he has at his disposal, fighting and twisting just to hear Will snarl and squeeze his throat tighter to force compliance from him. This is how alphas love, with blood and brutality and teeth, and Hannibal loves it.

"You – are – mine," Will says, like a god to his first creation. "You are *mine* and no one else's."

"Yes, Will," Hannibal whines.

"You'll never leave me – "

"Never!"

"You'll never love anyone else – "

"Never!"

"And you will never," Will snarls, "*ever* go hunting without me."

Hannibal's response is lost in a pained growl, mostly because Will purposely didn't stretch him enough for a knot, but as he is, he would rather die than have Will leave him, and so he shakes and trembles and whines as pleasure and pain ricochet through his body, his mind so jumbled up between the pleasure of Will filling him to the brim and the pain of Will's knot keeping it all inside.

Will doesn't stop, even after he comes, for an alpha in rut is meant to breed, and breed, and breed until there is no chance of coming out without a child. Even though he can't properly thrust, he still moves, if only to hear Hannibal howl as his knot presses against his prostate.

It's so good, and so bad, and so *good*, but Hannibal does not come, and the pleasure spirals upwards until it's indistinguishable from pain, because an alpha cannot come without the knot, and the knot does not happen without proper stimulation.

Stimulation Will has denied him, and bound his hands so that he cannot provide it to himself.

Normally, Will is kind, and squeezes his hands tight around Hannibal's knot so that he may come, but right now, all Hannibal tastes in the air is cruelty and pleasure, and when he struggles, Will pushes his face into the bed until he can hardly breathe.

"Did you hear me?" Will purrs, breathless and smug.

Hannibal whines into the bed, humping his hips in search of something, anything, but Will laughs cruelly instead. One hand latches onto Hannibal's hip to lift him upright, held there by Will as he kneels, and he pushes Hannibal even further into the blankets, so that he is presenting like a common omega, wanton and open and begging for release, tied up and bound for his alpha's pleasure alone.

"I said, did you hear me, Hannibal?" Will repeats.

"Yes," Hannibal says hoarsely, because an alpha on the cusp of release will say anything to tip over the edge.

Unfortunately, Will knows that too. He stops thrusting and leans down, until his breath is like lava on Hannibal's ears, and croons, "You will never, ever, *ever* go hunting without me again, will you, Hannibal?"

"Will – "

"Will you, Hannibal?" Will says, and tightens his grip upon Hannibal's neck until he feels like he might black out.

"No," Hannibal chokes out. "No, never, never, Will, please – "

"Because if you do," Will purrs in his ear, "oh, Hannibal, I will make this week look like a vacation on the beach. I will tie you up and leave you behind and enjoy myself in faraway countries until you can hardly remember what I look like, until the rut comes and leaves you humping the air for hours and hours and hours, until you can't even tell when it is day and when it is night. Do you understand?"

Hannibal can't help the distress that pours off of him. A week without Will had been torture; he can't imagine a minute longer, never mind days upon days.

"Never again," Hannibal swears.

Pleasure rolls off of his mate, like sugar and cinnamon with the heady spice that is purely Will. Will's grip upon his neck gentles, turning into soft strokes across his skin, and Will rubs his cheek against Hannibal's hair, scenting him.

"I'm glad we came to an understanding," Will says softly.

Then Will leans down, and sets his fangs to the back of Hannibal's neck, and bites until he breaks open the bonding gland and tastes blood, and Hannibal howls and writhes and kicks like a freshly caught stallion. Yet he is caught, as surely as a fish in a net, and Will holds him steady with hands and knot and teeth, and as soon as Hannibal begins to settle, Will's free hand snakes down to squeeze around Hannibal's knot, and the cycle starts all over again.

And when the pleasure turns to pain, when Hannibal can't bear the touch of his mate any longer, when Hannibal is overheated and exhausted and breathless, Will pulls out and bares his throat and commands, "Claim me."

And Hannibal does.

Afterwards, when rut is done, Will and Hannibal stagger to the shower, because the bed looks like someone has been murdered, soaked through with blood and sweat and come, and Hannibal honestly thinks he'll have to replace the entire damn thing. Will is sweet now, kissing him and purring and scenting, and Hannibal can't help but purr in return, besotted as always, and now bound forever.

He washes his mate's back, checking on the bite wound, and smiles at the sight of it.

"You're very pleased with yourself," Will says, arching under Hannibal's hands, the words slurred by exhaustion. "Even without fangs, you made good attempts."

"I have a beautiful house," Hannibal says, "a beautiful garden, and a beautiful mate. What else could I ask for?"

"One that doesn't drive you into rut?"

Hannibal shrugs. Perhaps it might be a warning sign for normal couples – one mate rejecting the other to trigger rut – but all Hannibal can think of is the lovely ache between his thighs and even lovelier ache on the back of his neck. "My rut would come eventually. At least we were prepared for this one."

They will still need to eat and drink and sleep, of course, because Will could only coax Hannibal to do so much that wasn't frantic rutting, but Hannibal is still alive and feels only settled now, so he can't complain.

Will turns around and loops his arms around Hannibal's neck. He still has some alpha red in his eyes, leftover adrenaline from knotting so many times, but he only rubs their jaws together to mix their scents. "And you'll keep your promise to me?" he says, eyes dancing.

Hannibal laughs. Only Will would be angrier that Hannibal had not taken him along for the hunt than at the idea of Hannibal hunting in the first place.

"I made a promise, dear Will," Hannibal says, kissing his alpha, his mate, his beautiful Will. "And I always keep my promises."

FINIS

End Notes

A/N: And after that, Will and Hannibal are happily mated, and go on hunts TOGETHER, and it's so wonderful and amazing and awesome that Hannibal never ever hunts alone again. Plus, you know, Will made him promise.

HUGE THANKS to the mods of the Hannigram A/B/O Reverse Bang! And all of my love and appreciation to my wonderful artist, Hannibalisanass. Finally, thanks to my friends who cheered me on while writing this.

All typos and continuity errors are mine. This fic was written entirely by me going "wheeeeee" and gleefully putting words to text, no outlining or planning involved.

Check out the other amazing works in the A/B/O Reverse Bang collection, cuz they're pretty amazing.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!